

# How California RNs Can Prepare for Disaster Response

June 2005

The Board of Registered Nursing receives many calls from RNs asking how they can help in relief efforts, as well as in preparation for any possible terrorism threats in California. This page is designed to provide RNs with accurate, current information about the agencies that need their assistance. It also provides resources for information on bioterrorism.

## **RN Practice During Declared State of Emergency**

RNs who are currently licensed in another state may provide health care in California **only if** a declared emergency overwhelms the response capability of California's practitioners, and the Director of Emergency Medical Services Authority requests the out-of-state assistance. (Business and Professions Code Section 900). The Nursing Practice Act also provides for out-of-state RNs to assist in the event of a public disaster or epidemic. (Business and Professions Code Section 2727(d))

If such a need arises, the Board of Registered Nursing would post information on its website to advise whether EMSA is requesting out-of-state RNs to assist.

## **Preparing to Respond**

To be ready to help if a disaster strikes, RNs are urged to take advantage of multiple training and educational opportunities through these agencies:

- **Emergency Medical Services Authority**  
This State agency needs RNs for its Disaster Medical Assistance Teams to provide emergency medical care during a disaster or other unusual event. DMATs are designed to be a rapid-response team to supplement local medical care when needed in California, and at times, in other states. They are part of the National Disaster Medical System. RNs can obtain more information about DMATs and training that is available at [www.emsa.ca.gov](http://www.emsa.ca.gov). This website also connects you to local emergency medical services agencies.
- **American Red Cross**  
RN's can contact their local chapter of the American Red Cross to enroll in training sessions to become eligible to serve as Red Cross volunteers. You can reach the Red Cross at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

## **Informational Resources**

RNs are referred to the following resources for current information about bioterrorism and emergency preparedness:

- **CA Department of Health Services ([www.dhs.ca.gov](http://www.dhs.ca.gov))**  
Bioterrorism updates, CA hospital bioterrorism response planning guide, links to additional related information.
- **CA Office of Emergency Services ([www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov))**  
"Safety Information and Referral Line" is a toll-free, 24-hour, recorded information about anthrax, basic emergency preparedness, and suspicious mail. Information technicians are available from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily for referrals and additional information. For non-

emergency reference only. (800) 550-5234. (For individuals with hearing impairments: TTY (800) 550-5281).

- **State of California website**  
Information about anthrax prevention and treatment, California's response to terrorism, and the narrative on biological threat safety produced by the California Highway Patrol at [www.chp.ca.gov/html/anthrax.html](http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/anthrax.html)
- **Centers for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov)**  
Information about emergency preparedness and response including links to videos and satellite broadcasts on bioterrorism.
- **UCLA Public Health Division (www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/bioter/bioterrorism.html)**  
Detailed, clinical information about epidemiology.
- **National Institutes of Health (sis.nlm.nih.gov/tox/chemwar.html)**  
Information concerning various toxic chemicals.